

**ON THE LOOKOUT:  
SAFETY FOR TODDLERS**

**As every parent or caregiver knows, looking after toddlers is an enormous responsibility. As they move from crawling to walking, young children are always exploring and always susceptible to injuries, falls and other accidents.**

The California Children and Families Commission and each county level commission, responsible for implementing Prop. 10 – the tobacco tax earmarked for early childhood development and anti-tobacco programs – believe all children should have a healthy, happy start in life. A safe home should be a top priority.

Whether kitchen or bath, play area or stairway, there are many hazards that can be easily avoided by taking simple safety precautions.

**Think Like A Kid!**

Shelia McGregor, a Public Health Nurse and the Black Infant Health Coordinator for Northern California's Solano County, says parents should "think like a kid" when looking for hazards in the home. McGregor advises parents to get on their hands and knees at "kid level" and look for hazards that could harm children including

electrical outlets, dangling drape cords and unlocked cabinets.

"Children are especially curious when they're toddlers," says McGregor. "They're still learning and experimenting, but they don't always know what not to do. We don't want a child to stop learning, but we want to keep them from getting into areas that could cause them injury."

**Preventing Falls**

Children are always prone to falls. But by keeping floor areas and main pathways clear of toys, loose rugs and other objects, a serious fall can be prevented. Youngsters also develop a love of climbing onto chairs and other furniture, not only for the adventure of it, but also to reach a goal, such as the top of a kitchen counter to reach an object that might catch their attention, says McGregor.

"When they want something, children have a tendency to use chairs to reach what has been put out of the way," says McGregor. "So it's always best to try place items that are safe for children in lower areas where your child can reach them, and not in high places where they'll try to climb up and risk a fall from the counter."

Safety gates can also help keep children away from stairs or rooms that have hazards in them. Look for safety gates that children cannot dislodge easily, but that adults can open and close without difficulty. For the top of stairs, gates that screw to the wall are more secure than "pressure" gates.

**Bathroom Safety**

The bathroom is an especially dangerous place for kids, but by taking a few simple steps, accidents can be avoided. First always make certain that medicines are kept in locked cabinets and out of the reach of children. Second, never leave children unattended while bathing – even if they're with an older sibling. And remember that bathing toys should be large enough to prevent choking but small enough so that younger children can't be trapped or suffocated in the tub. Third, take advantage of easy-to-install safety accessories. A wise investment toward bathroom safety, says McGregor, is a faucet anti-

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scalding device, which helps to regulate water temperature to prevent burns. Finally, always be sure to keep toilet lids down at all times or install lid-locking devices, since toilets – like any source of water – can be a place for accidental drownings.

### Window Safety

Children can strangle themselves in drapery and blind cords, so it's important that all such cords be cut short or replaced with special flexible tension cords to prevent children from becoming entangled. Parents should also consider installing window guards, so that windows can't be easily opened by children, as well as safety glass to prevent injuries if a child falls into a window or glass door. Placing decals on windows and glass doors can also make them more visible and prevent children (and adults) from running into them.

### Kitchen Safety

The kitchen is another room in the home where toddlers should never be left unsupervised, even when placed in a secure high chair. Important precautions include covers over the stove's burners and knobs and locks for oven doors. Just as in the bathroom area, all cleaning products, utensils and other similar items should be kept in locked cabinets and out of the reach of children. And, always make sure that smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are in working order and have working batteries.

### The Cost of Childproofing

How much will childproofing your home cost? For safety's sake, this is not an area to cut corners. Purchase quality and certified safety equipment to keep your child and your whole family safe. Childproofing items for your home can run anywhere from \$50 to \$150. But, most importantly, even

after you have purchased safety devices and installed them, continue to make daily checks around your home for safety hazards.

"Parents have so many things to think about and prioritize, especially concerning their children," says McGregor. "But by helping parents make the right decisions about safety for their child and for themselves, they can feel empowered in their homes." 🖐️



## BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN

**There are few issues as important as the impact of violence on young children. Many studies have conclusively proven that exposure to violence takes a tremendously negative toll on a child's social, intellectual and emotional growth.**

What's more, children who suffer from violence are more susceptible to increased risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, anger, lower achievement in school and alcohol abuse in later years.

In response to new calls to intervene in this critical area, the California Children and Families Commission, in collaboration with the California Attorney General's office, is co-sponsoring a statewide initiative designed to help cope with the devastating effects of violence on young children. Called Safe from the Start, it is the first partnership of its kind in the state.

Launched last May with a conference attended by more than 600 representatives from law enforcement and a variety of children and family service providers, Safe from the Start is intended to not only spur a statewide conversation on the issue, but also develop regional solutions through community involvement. At the heart of the endeavor are six community forums to be held throughout California, which are now being finalized and will be announced shortly.

At each forum, community leaders from a variety of disciplines, including education, law

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enforcement, health and social services will join together to pool resources and develop a comprehensive approach so that kids who experience violence will get the help they need – quickly.

“While there are many programs currently underway to address the issue of children and violence, the approach now in place is fragmented at best. Organizations that are responsible for helping young kids in need, such as law enforcement or education or social services, don’t collaborate as effectively as they could,” said Rob Reiner, chair of the California Children and Families Commission, the state body charged with implementing Prop. 10, the 50 cent-per-pack tax on tobacco earmarked for early childhood development and anti-tobacco programs. “Establishing a more integrated and effective system of support for children and their families will

not only help reduce the impact of violence on children, but also help prevent violence from occurring in the first place.”

Breaking the cycle of violence through intervention is particularly critical for the African American community, said Dr. I. Jean Davis, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science in Los Angeles.

“Children in the African American community are often at an even higher risk for exposure to violence,” said Davis. “A program like Safe from the Start will help assure that these children and all children in California receive the help and the care they need from as many different sources as possible.”

For more information on Safe from the Start, visit the Web site [www.safefromthestart.org](http://www.safefromthestart.org). 🖐

## 8 Home Safety Tips For Kids

1. Watch infants and toddlers at all times when they are playing outdoors.
2. Keep children away from pools, Jacuzzis or small tubs in the yard. When swimming, make sure children always wear proper lifesaving equipment, like a life vest.
3. If you own a pool, make sure that it is fenced in and that all doors leading to the pool area are always locked.
4. Keep your yard free of weeds, poisonous plants, pesticides and fertilizers. Young children may attempt to eat them.
5. Lawn mowers, rakes and other outdoor tools should be kept in a garage or shed so that toddlers are not tempted to play with them.
6. Do not allow children near grills, especially while cooking.
7. Make sure that electrical outlets are completely covered and that cords are short and out of a child’s reach.
8. Remove all unstable furniture from your home to avoid tripping while holding your baby.

## A DREAM FOR MY CHILD

**Eleven-month-old Fred Carr II (pictured) is featured this month in A Dream For My Child.**



His father, Fred Carr, wrote the following: *I have always envisioned my child having the freedom to do as he pleases with his life. The main goal I have for him is to be a productive citizen in this world. I am looking for him to be happy and have a better life than I have, and with many more choices.* 🖐

**It's All About The Kids**  
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# Please

## don't smoke in my world.

If you smoke when you're pregnant, you can damage your baby's tiny lungs before she has a chance to take her first breath. You can also cause her to be born with low birth weight.

Smoking around your children can give them asthma. It can also cause serious ear problems and hearing loss.

Children deserve to grow up in a world that is loving, nurturing, pure and smoke-free. So, please don't smoke in their world.

To learn more about the dangers of smoking around your child and how to quit, call 1-800-KIDS-025.

### It's all about the kids.

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